

Tracking a child's progress through the EYFS

A lot of childminders are getting Ofsted inspection actions related to tracking a child's progress, so I thought I might have a look at them in a little more detail.

It is important that you can show how every child in your provision is making good progress in their learning and development. It is not enough to say 'John is doing really well' - you need evidence that John's time with you is helping him to learn new things.

You cannot track progress unless you know where the child's learning journey starts - so you should work with parents in the first weeks of the child's time with you to note their 'starting points.' You should then plot these using Development Matters as a guide.

The majority of childminders track progress by using their observations, assessments and next steps planning to write short summaries every few months. If you leave it for 6 months you will get a much better overview of learning than if you do them every 4 weeks - you will also be able to keep up better! There is no point in setting yourself an impossible job.

However, the time scale you choose is up to you and you might have to do them more regularly to fit in with Local Authority expectations. I just find them much more valuable for me and parents if I do them over a longer time.

So, you have your observations, assessments and planning - and you have Development Matters which you have used to note that the child is progressing through the ages and stages. Now you just need to pull it all together. You can use a form like your 2 year progress check form - or design something different.

It needs to show that the child is doing well - or to highlight areas that need work. It should include comments from parents and the child where possible.

You use it to write the next series of 'next steps' for the child.

For example...

Child A is 2.5 and has been struggling with sharing - you noted it in the last summary assessment. Since then you have been reading lots of sharing books - some of which you have let the child take home to read with parents, played sharing and turn taking games, modelled good sharing, given lots of praise for good sharing etc and the child is coming on in leaps and bounds.

Look at the Development Matters guidance and decide what age and stage the child is working within - note that down and think about how you can support them in the future... or if you and parents are confident that they have cracked sharing, think what else you might need to work on with them.

You will have lots of ongoing next steps activities planned for each child in your group. It is important not to get bogged down with too many - I tend to pick one big next steps from each area of learning and focus on it over the coming weeks... I then have others which are ongoing such as a child's love of music (plan lots of song sessions) and obsession with Peppa Pig (buy a sticker book and some colouring sheets)...

Another example...

Child B is 3 and you have been worried for a while about his lack of speech. You have talked to parents but they say he is fine. They will not give you permission to access help for him.

When you write Child B's summary at age 3 you will have to note some negatives - but you can also talk positively about the ways you are working with parents (!) to support him to use his words and communicate with you.

You might be taking him to a singing group, organising daily one-one chat sessions with him, using puppets during story telling because they seem to inspire him, using ideas from a training course you have attended etc.

Most Ofsted inspectors look for tracking that gives an overview of the child's age and stage of development linked to Development Matters. These are 'best fit' judgements - you should not be expected to tick off or highlight a list. If this happens you must challenge the inspector's judgement - they must not use Development Matters in this way!

Quote from my www.facebook.com/KnutsfordChildminding page - Ofsted inspectors have been told to stop relying so heavily on Development Matters when making their judgements - <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/early-years-june-2013>. If you are given unrealistic inspection actions taken from Development Matters you can challenge them using this wording!

'Inspectors should be aware that 'Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage' has been produced as a supporting document for providers. It is not statutory. However, there is evidence that some practitioners are becoming over-reliant on the examples of practice in the document rather than identifying next steps for learning and devising activities and materials that are best suited to the particular needs of the children at their setting, in their care.

Inspectors should not refer to Development Matters in their evidence although they may wish to check development milestones to assess how children are progressing.

Inspectors may also wish to include some reference to developmental bands as part of their evidence of observations of tracked children.

However, recommendations must not be taken directly from the wording of Development Matters. Actions must be clearly linked to the Statutory Framework for the Early Years.'

Tracking is easy for childminders because we work with small groups of children. We are constantly aware of what the child can do linked to Development Matters because we know him well and we are observing him during his day-to-day play.

The child is not failing because you have not observed him doing or saying one of the statements in Development Matters - you are not his full time carer and he does things in other settings as well as with you.

However, if there are any big gaps in the child's progress, your summary assessment and tracking sheet will help you to notice them. You can then talk to parents who might be able to fill in some gaps and things you have not observed which are happening at home... and work on some next steps can support him in the future.

If you would like help with any areas of provision - if you have been given an inspection action you do not understand - if you are unsure about how to use a piece of paper your Local Authority has given you - don't sit and worry about it!

Please ask! 😊